

The Classical Revival style Golden Meadow High School stands on the west bank of Bayou Lafourche in the Lafourche Parish community for which it is named. The symmetrical façade of the masonry building features a two-story central block with a one-story wing extending from each side. One story classroom wings also extend along each side of the two-story section, and three small wings are located at the rear. (See attached sketch and photos.) The school's National Register eligibility has not been compromised by the alterations it has received since its 1931 construction.

Designed by New Orleans architects Favrot and Livaudais, the polychrome brick school exhibits a number of Classical architectural elements. The most pronounced is the treatment of the central block's façade, which is articulated as a temple. It features a large pediment with a raking denticulated cornice. Below the pediment is an entablature with a denticulated frieze. Two pairs of colossal pilasters with Doric capitals (framing the entrance) and two sets of exaggerated quoins (one set located on each corner of the central block) give the appearance of supporting the entablature and pediment. Two sets of vertical strips subdivide the pediment into three parts; the pediment's middle section is pierced by a large oculus decorated by voussoirs. Classical features found on the rest of the building include the presence of a more simple entablature which encircles the building and the placement of quoins (also exaggerated) on each major corner of the structure.

Although not specifically associated with the Classical Revival style, other interesting architectural motifs are found on the building. Within the facades of the two, one story wings, for example, glazed green ceramic tiles are used to outline decorative panels of polychrome brick laid in a grid of diamond shapes. Identical ceramic tiles cover the face of the central block's pediment. Cast iron is used in balustrades located beneath the central block's first floor windows, a screen decorating the opening to the central block's recessed front entrance, and within the oculus. Finally, a high concrete watertable encircles the building.

The school's floor plan is somewhat unusual. It is organized around a large auditorium which fills almost all of the central block. On the first floor, an entrance and offices for the school's administrative personnel fill the space between this auditorium and the building's front wall. Each of the previously mentioned one-story sections is filled by three large classrooms which open directly into the auditorium, with the result that the latter serves as a circulation space as well as a meeting area. Two additional classrooms are located in small one-story wings which adjoin the main block at its rear corners (see attached drawing) and one additional room is found within one wing on the front of the building. The second front wing formerly contained a classroom, but it has been subdivided to provide additional office and storage space for the school's staff. On the second floor, a balcony outlines three sides of the auditorium (omitting only the side where the stage is located), creating a mezzanine space. Two classrooms are located on the main block's second floor. These fill the area above the first floor entrance and offices and open to the mezzanine. Original doors and subdivided transoms survive on the interior, as do the wooden floors in the building's offices and auditorium.

In addition to the previously mentioned subdivision of one classroom, other alterations to the school include the replacement of its original multi-pane, double-hung windows with one-over-one windows; the loss (due to hurricane damage) of the original slate roof and its replacement with a standing seam metal roof; the installation of floor and ceiling tiles in most classrooms; the loss of the auditorium's seats; and the construction of covered breezeways connecting the rear and one side of the building to additional structures constructed in the 1950s. (Note: The boundaries of this nomination are being cut so as to exclude these structures.) In addition, the building was cleaned, its mortar repointed and its wooden trim painted in the spring of 196. Although the loss of the roof and windows is regrettable, there is no doubt that former students of the school would recognize the building if they were to visit it today. As the symbol of the "coming of age" of education in the Golden Meadow area, the high school is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1931
ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Favrot and Livaudais
CRITERION: A

Golden Meadow High School is locally significant in the area of education because its 1931 construction represents the "coming of age" of education in the southern tip of Lafourche Parish.

Although a few settlers arrived in the area which would become Golden Meadow as early as 1842, the French Acadian community did not experience serious growth until after 1900. Part of the reason for this slow progress was the extreme remoteness of the site. Lower Lafourche Parish, where Golden Meadow is located, is a major wetlands area bordering the Gulf of Mexico. The settlements here are far apart and separated by vast expanses of swampland. Thus, until the construction of the first dirt road in 1903 (necessitated, in part, by the damming of Bayou Lafourche as its juncture with the Mississippi River in Ascension Parish), almost all transportation took place via boat on Bayou Lafourche. Despite the difficulties of its location, the village had obtained two stores and a "meat handling" facility by 1913. A major growth spurt occurred in 1915 after a hurricane struck Leeville, a town sited on the bayou even closer to the coast than Golden Meadow. After the storm some Leeville residents moved northward, settling in Golden Meadow. By 1917 the town had an ice plant and a factory for packaging shrimp. Additional factories followed within a few years. A hotel was open by 1921, a movie theatre and a bank by 1922, and a post office by 1923. The first resident doctor arrived in 1928. Until the discovery of oil in 1938, Golden Meadow's economy was based on farming in the summer and hunting and trapping in the winter. Although many former fishermen became oil field workers or established businesses which service that industry, fishing has remained an important contributor to the town's prosperity. The community incorporated in 1950.

Like other villages facing the problems of life in a remote wetlands area, Golden Meadow was slow to provide adequate educational opportunities for its children. In fact, the first school in lower Lafourche Parish was not in Golden Meadow but in the Cheniere area (a community well below Golden Meadow on Bayou Lafourche). This establishment opened some time before 1893 but was destroyed by a hurricane in that year. Apparently much of the community was destroyed as well, for some of its residents moved northward to Leeville. There another school opened. This private school offered the first five grades, and its teacher charged each student a quarter a week for the privilege of attending. A second hurricane in 1915 destroyed this school. As mentioned above, a number of Leeville residents then migrated northward to Golden Meadow.

The first educational facility actually located in Golden Meadow appears to have been a one room school (perhaps located in a dance pavilion). Students were required to pay one dollar a month to attend and had to furnish their own desks and chairs as well. Later the Woodmen of the World Hall (located on the upper floor of a local grocery store) provided shelter for a somewhat larger school whose teacher focused primarily on reading and math. By 1918 a new four-room public elementary or grammar school had opened. However, it lost its principal in that year when he was drafted by the military for service in World War I. The next principal was Loretta McCabe, who moved from New Orleans to Golden Meadow to take the position. Under her leadership the school prospered, expanding its services to include grades one through seven and adding new classrooms to the facility. However, education for most Golden Meadow area children ended at this point. The closest high schools were at Cut Off and Larose – both considered far away at a time when roads were poor. In addition, most parents could not afford the "extravagant" cost of boarding their children near the Cut Off and Larose facilities.

The 1931 opening of Golden Meadow High School, constructed as the result of a 1930 bond election, changed all that. Like those of other communities whose educational endeavors were maturing at the time, the school board built a "modern brick building" which provided a

number of amenities. In addition to a large auditorium and offices for administrative staff, the new school offered twelve classrooms. Grades one through ten were taught until 1933, when official high school accreditation was obtained. This accreditation added the eleventh grade to the curriculum, and the first class graduated in 1934. (A twelfth grade was not added until C. 1948.)

The opportunity to obtain an advanced education made a major difference in the lives of local children. According to former student Mrs. Lou Pitre, until Golden Meadow opened, children would drop out of school before the seventh grade. They felt there was no need to bother with education since there was no further instruction available. Thus, the very existence of the new building encouraged children to stay in school and to excel at their studies. As bus transportation became available children from as far away as Galliano and Leeville were able to attend. The school provided opportunities for athletic competition in basketball almost as soon as it opened, and a band was organized in 1939. Importantly, many of the area's French speaking children learned to speak English at the Golden Meadow School. There can be no doubt that the school expanded the horizons of its students by providing opportunities they might otherwise have never received. Thus, as the symbol of the "coming of age" of education in Golden Meadow and lower Lafourche Parish, Golden Meadow High School is an outstanding candidate for National Register listing.

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Site visit by National Register staff.

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